

A guide to storing vegetables and fruit

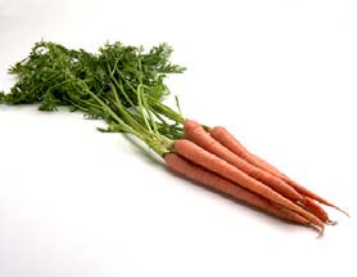


Storing Vegetables

Beans, green - Refrigerate for five days. Choose brightly coloured beans with a smooth surface. Avoid those that are leathery or withered. If the bean doesn't snap when you bend it 90°, it's past its prime.

Beans, yellow wax - Refrigerate for five days. Choose brightly coloured beans with a smooth surface. Avoid those with brown spots, withered ends, large scars or bulging seeds.

Broccoli - Refrigerate in the vegetable crisper for up to five days in a plastic bag with holes. Yellowing heads are past their prime.



Cabbage, green and red - Refrigerate for one to two weeks. Choose those that are heavy for their size with crisp, tightly packed leaves.

Carrots - Young: choose long and narrow for best taste, remove tops, refrigerate covered for two weeks. Mature: refrigerate covered for two to three weeks.

Cauliflower - Choose heavy, firm, creamy white heads with compact florets. Refrigerate unwashed for up to one week.

Celery - Refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to two weeks. Stalks should be firm without any marks. The leaves should be green not yellow.



Corn-on-the-cob - Unhusked: refrigerate two to three days; husks should be tightly wrapped, grass-green and slightly damp. The corn silk should be dry but not rotting. The stem ends should be moist and not yellowed. Husked: refrigerate one to two days, wrapped in a damp towel.

Cucumbers, field or greenhouse - Choose those that are firm without any marks. Avoid those with soft spots especially at the ends. If they have yellow streaks they are past their prime. Refrigerate in a plastic bag for one week.



Garlic - Store for a few weeks to several months in a dry, cool, dark, well-aired place. Choose heads that are firm. If you can squeeze the garlic and feel the cloves give, then it is past its prime. Avoid garlic that has a musty smell or green growth.

Lettuce, iceberg - Choose firm, heavy heads. Avoid those that have brown or slimy edges. Refrigerate, unwashed, in a sealed plastic bag for up to two weeks.

Lettuce, green leaf - Avoid those with edges that are dark or slimy. Wash before storing. Be sure to spin dry or pat dry with clean towel. Refrigerate in a plastic bag that also contains a clean paper or cloth towel for up to one week.

Lettuce, Romaine - Trim ends and damaged outer leaves. Wash in cool water. Drain well. Refrigerate in a covered container with a clean paper or cloth towel for up to one week.

Mushrooms - Store in a paper bag and refrigerate for five days, or refrigerate in a single layer on a tray, covered with a damp paper towel for up to three days. Gently wipe with a damp paper towel or rinse and pat dry just before using.

Onions, cooking - Choose onions that feel heavy for their size. Avoid those with soft spots or green sprouts. Store in a single layer. If in a mesh bag, store in a cool, airy and dark place for two to three weeks. If in a plastic bag, remove and store in a basket or paper bag in a cool, airy and dark place. Once cut, refrigerate tightly wrapped for two to three days.

Onions, green, also known as scallions - Choose those with bright green tops and firm white bases. Those with more white are best. Refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to one week. When ready to use, cut root ends off and remove any damaged outer stems and wash well.



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Storing Vegetables continued



Sweet peppers, green, red and yellow - Refrigerate for up to two weeks. Choose brightly coloured peppers that have a smooth and shiny skin. Avoid those with soft spots.

Potatoes - Check paper bag and remove any spoiled potatoes. Return to paper bag and store mature potatoes for one to two weeks in a dry, cool, airy, dark place.

Rutabaga - Looks like a large turnip and has firm, yellow flesh. Pick solid, firm rutabagas. Refrigerate for up to two weeks.



Squash - acorn, butternut, buttercup, hubbard and other hard shelled winter squash. Keep in a cool, dark, airy place for three to six months.

Tomatoes - Keep at room temperature, uncovered and out of direct sunlight for three or four days. Choose firm, red tomatoes without any blemishes. Ripe tomatoes will give with gentle palm pressure. When ripe, use tomatoes within one or two days.

Turnips - Choose those no bigger than an egg and heavy for their size. Refrigerate or store in cool basement for several weeks. Waxed turnips will keep up to three months.

Zucchini - Choose small, tender ones with smooth skin, deep green with light specks of gold or white. Be sure they are not withered. Those less than five inches are the most flavourful. Refrigerate for up to one week in a plastic bag without any moisture.



Storing Fruit

Apples - From August to January, can refrigerate for up to two months. From February to July, refrigerate in the crisper for two to three weeks in a plastic bag with holes. Look for firm and smooth-skinned, free of bruises. They should smell fresh, not musty.

Avocados - Store at room temperature until ripe; ripe when black. Refrigerate ripe for two to five days.

Bananas - Store at room temperature, uncovered for one to two days until ripe; ripe when tiny black specks appear. If refrigerated, banana skin will get dark but inside will remain fresh.

Grapes - Ripe when plump, full coloured and firmly attached (no brown area at stem). Refrigerate for up to five days; wash only when ready to eat.



Melons – most types. Store at room temperature until ripe; blossom end should give with slight pressure; no lumps or soft spots. When ripe, refrigerate whole, uncovered for three to five days.

Melons – **watermelon**. Store at room temperature for a few days or refrigerate for up to one week, whole, and uncovered. A ripe watermelon should have a dull skin and give a hollow thump when slapped. Always refrigerate once cut and use within two days.

Oranges - Can store in an open plastic bag at room temperature for up to one week. Can refrigerate in an open plastic bag for up to one month. Should be firm and heavy for their size. Often, ripe oranges will have a slight greening.

Peaches - Keep at room temperature until ripe. Store uncovered in a single layer in refrigerator for up to one week. Ripe when background colour is overall creamy or yellow.

Pears - Store at room temperature until ripe. Then refrigerate for two to three days, uncovered in a single layer. Pears are ripe when fragrant and the flesh at the stem yields to gentle pressure.



References: Canadian Produce Marketing Agency at www.cpm.ca/nutrition/en/storage.html
Dr. Richter's Fresh Produce Guide. Richter, H.2002. Florida: Try-Foods Internationals Inc.